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ABSTRACT

Since the advent of the Education for Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the provision of special education has moved from restrictive settings to the general education environment. Presently, schools are placing learners with special education needs into the general education classroom and providing special education services in that environment. The reform process for education in general has culminated in the development of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which is a process approach that attempts to meet the needs of all learners. For many school districts, OBE has become a volatile issue. A survey of rural schools in the panhandle of Nebraska, western South Dakota, and eastern Wyoming that have completed an OBE process suggests that local and state agencies are driving the reform process in most of the rural schools surveyed. Administrators, teachers, and community members indicated that learners with special education needs were considered, yet the same respondents were reluctant to state that all students with special education needs should be placed in typical classroom settings utilizing a typical curriculum. Rather, they stated that such decisions should be based on the individual's label or disability. The survey questionnaire is included. (TD)

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OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION AND THE SPECIAL EDUCATION LEARNER

Since the advent of the Education for Handicapped Children Act of 1975, special education has moved from the provision of special education in restrictive settings to the general education environment. During the 1970's, this movement, referred to as mainstreaming, was to return learners from special education classrooms to nonacademic classes, such as physical education and art. In the 1980's, children were placed in more rigorous courses with a primary emphasis on socialization. This was referred to as integration. Presently, schools are placing learners with special education needs into the general education classroom and providing special education services in that environment.

The drive from segregated settings has come not necessarily from governmental mandate but various movements in general and special education. For instance, in general education movements such as restructuring, modernization, effective schools, America 2000, and more recently Goals 2000 one finds similar concepts with special education trends. These include the Regular Education Initiative (REI), General Education Initiative (GEI), and unified system of education. Each offers a different approach, yet these movements share the concept of providing special education services to all learners, including those with disabilities. An example of this approach is Vermont's Green Mountain Challenge (Kay, Fitzgerald, Mellencamp, & Biggam, 1993). Vermont's Department of Education specifically addressed the needs of all their learners including those with disabilities in their reform process.

The reform process has culminated in the development of providing individualized education to all learners. This is best exemplified by Outcome-Based Education (OBE). This is best exemplified by one of the initiators of the OBE movement, William G. Spady (1984):

> "Excellence occurs when the instructional system is able to provide the individual learner with an appropriate level of challenge and a realistic opportunity to succeed on a

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> frequent and continual basis for each instructional goal in the program."

OBE is a process approach which attempts to meet the needs of all learners (Brandt, 1993). For many school districts, OBE has become a volatile issue. Rather than use OBE, school personnel and community members have used learner outcomes, target goals, modernization, and restructuring as descriptors of the same or similar processes.

The present determined if schools in the rural panhandle of Nebraska,western South Dakota, and eastern Wyoming which have completed an OBE process did consider the needs of learners with disabilities in their planning.

Method

Subjects

Departments of education in the states of Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming were contacted. These states were contacted as there was an impetus for schools to complete an OBE process. The names of rural school districts in each state which completed an OBE process were identified. Rural was applied to districts

> when the number of inhabitants is [was] less than 150 per square mile or when located in counties with 60% or more of the population living in communities no larger than 5,000 inhabitants. Districts with more than 10,000 students and those within a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau, are [were] not considered rural. (Helge, 1983)

Subsequently, school district superintendents were contacted by letter and requested to participate in the evaluation of the OBE or similar process utilized by the school. The protocol of the evaluation was explained to the superintendent and he/she was requested to identify a principal, teacher, and community member who participated in the process.

It was explained that the protocol will be uniformly utilized with the each, and that the confidentiality of the participants and the school would be maintained. The superintendent was given the option of receiving the final results of the study.

Protocol

The individuals the superintendent identified were contacted by letter. They were requested to participate in the study. Assurances of anonymity and confidentiality were shared with each. If the participant agreed, the attached protocol was administered.

Results and Discussion

Based on preliminary results, local and state agencies are driving the reform process in most of the rural schools surveyed. Administrators, teachers, and community members indicated that learners with special education needs were considered during the process. Yet, these same respondents were reticent in stating all students with special education needs should be placed in typical classroom settings utilizing a typical curriculum. They stated such decisions should be based on the individual's label or disability.

Although most respondents seemed to support the concept of OBE, they were reluctant in providing the same support to the idea of inclusion. The only sure way of determining whether such efforts resulted in real changes has yet to be determined. Kay, Fitzgerald, Mellencamp, and Biggam (1993) identified a technique to determine whether or not learners with disabilities were included in the reform process. This involves determining the extent of inclusion within the school. Specifically, this entails evaluating the consideration of learners with disabilities during the OBE process and later comparing the number of those individuals found in the typical classroom. Some additional questions which may be considered include:

1. Does the OBE process really address the needs of all learners?
2. How does the inclusion of learners with disabilities relate to demographic factors, including size of school district?
3. How do the obtained data relate to that of larger districts?

TARGET GOALS/STUDENT LEARNER OUTCOMES EDUCATION SURVEY

Thank you for participating in our survey. This survey will provide you with an opportunity to describe the consideration provided learners with disabilities during the Target Goals/Student Learner Outcomes process. We want to obtain your opinion on several key issues in the field and your perception of factors that are involved in the process. Your responses are needed by other professionals in their efforts to complete this process.

When finished, remember to return your completed questionnaire to us in the pre-addressed/stamped envelope. All responses are strictly confidential.

Instructions: Please complete the following questions by checking the appropriate blank.

1. What best describes your present involvement within the local school?

   - ❑ board member
   - ❑ superintendent
   - ❑ principal
   - ❑ teacher
   - ❑ other, please specify; _____

2. How many years have you participated in your school in this capacity?

   - ❑ two or less
   - ❑ two to five
   - ❑ five to ten
   - ❑ more than ten

3. What was your involvement in the process your school recently completed?

   - ❑ steering committee member
   - ❑ committee member
   - ❑ coordinator of Target Goals/Student Learner Outcomes process activities
   - ❑ participant in Target Goals/Student Learner Outcomes process activities
   - ❑ other, please specify; _____

4. How long did the process take to complete in your district?

   - ❑ less than one year
   - ❑ one year
   - ❑ two years
   - ❑ three years
   - ❑ other, please specify; _____

5. What was the guiding force behind your district's Target Goals/Student Learner Outcomes process?

   - ❑ administration directed
   - ❑ local school committees
   - ❑ state guidelines
   - ❑ organizationally directed (please specify (eg., local education agency, area education agency, etc.) _____

Please check the box which best represents your response to the statements below. If you are not sure of your response, please leave the question unmarked.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. In my school, every child, regardless of disability, belongs in a typical classroom.	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. All children need an individualized instructional program.	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. Resources are provided to each child to explore individual interests in the school environment.	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Nondisabled children can benefit from friendships with children who have disabilities.	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. In your school, general educators and special educators have integrated their resources to work together as a unified team to benefit all children.	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. The administration in your school creates a working climate in which staff are supported as they provide assistance to each other.	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Children with disabilities are actively encouraged to participate in the academic areas of the school.	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. Support services are altered for students with disabilities as their needs change throughout the school year.	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Parents of children with disabilities are made part of the school community.	❑	❑	❑	❑
10. Children with disabilities have a separate curriculum from the typical curriculum.	❑	❑	❑	❑
11. Teachers are afraid of being presumed incompetent if they seek peer collaboration in working with learners with disabilities.	❑	❑	❑	❑
12. Children with disabilities are included in as many testing and evaluation experiences with their nondisabled classmates as possible.	❑	❑	❑	❑
13. The needs of individuals with disabilities are considered in the process.	❑	❑	❑	❑

14. Some students with disabilities are teased or considered outcasts.	❑	❑	❑	❑
15. Special educators are isolated in separate rooms or departments.	❑	❑	❑	❑
16. Special educators have separate budgets and/or supervisors.	❑	❑	❑	❑
17. We cluster learners with disabilities in special groups or classrooms.	❑	❑	❑	❑
18. We provide services based on an individual's disability label.	❑	❑	❑	❑
19. Learners with disabilities can benefit from friendships with typical learners.	❑	❑	❑	❑
20. Learners with disabilities are placed in the regular classroom without concern for their individual needs.	❑	❑	❑	❑
21. Separate PTA and/or newsletters are supplied for parents of learners with disabilities.	❑	❑	❑	❑
22. The full school curriculum is modified to meet the needs of learners with disabilities.	❑	❑	❑	❑
23. Learners with disabilities are not included in testing and evaluation procedures with nondisabled classmates.	❑	❑	❑	❑
24. Learners with disabilities were not considered during the process.	❑	❑	❑	❑
25. Learners with disabilities are actively encouraged to participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.	❑	❑	❑	❑

Please write any comments you would like to share in the space provided.

Thank you very much for completing this form!

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